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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC APRIL 19, 1973 FROM
MEXICO IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 2680

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR/ MX

SUBJ: NARCOTICS: PROPOSED EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY

REFS: A. ALBERTI LETTER OF APRIL 9, B. ALBERTI/ ZWEIFEL APRIL 17
TELECON

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY NARCOTICS CONTROL COMMITTEE ENDORSES
USG SUPPORT FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY IN MEXICO. PROJECT
PROPOSED BY RESOURCE PLANNING CORPORATION SEEMS TO HOLD
PROMISE, ALTHOUGH SOME QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ANSWERED PRIOR
TO FINAL DECISION. DR. BELSASSO OF CEMEF EVIDENTLY HAS
OVER- SOLD POSSIBILITY OF UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT AT AN
EARLY DATE, AND EMBASSY CONSEQUENTLY HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO SOME
PRESSURE TO TRY TO GET HIM OFF THE HOOK VIA AN EARLY, POSITIVE
DECISION. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY NARCOTICS COMMITTEE ENDORSES IDEA OF AN EPIDEMI-
OLOGICAL STUDY SINCE, WE BELIEVE, VIGOR WITH WHICH GOM PRO-
SECUTES ANTI- NARCOTICS PROGRAM MIGHT WELL BE INCREASED WHEN
PROBLEM IS INTERNALIZED, I. E. WHEN MEXICANS HAVE BETTER
RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC THREAT (SEE PAGE 37 OF NCAP). IN THIS
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CONNECTION, PROJECT OUTLINED BY RESEARCH PLANNING CORPORATION (ENCLOSURE TO REFERENCE (A) SEEMS TO BE A GOOD STARTING POINT, ALTHOUGH IT POSSIBLY COULD BE REFINED TO USG ADVANTAGE (E. G. WITH GREATER EMPHASIS ON "HARD" DRUGS AND PERHAPS AN AREA ORIENTATION TO FOCUS ON BORDER CITIES). IN ORDER BETTER TO EVALUATE PROJECT, EMBASSY WOULD POSE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS.

A. REPORT REFERS REPEATEDLY TO "THE CENTER". ARE WE CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT THIS IS MEXICAN CENTER FOR DRUG DEPENDENCY RESEARCH (CEMEF) HEADED UP BY DR. BELSASSO?

B. RESEARCH PLANNING CORPORATION PLAN INCLUDES SOME ATTENTION TO QUESTION OF ALCOHOL ABUSE (TASK 2). TO EXTENT POSSIBLE EMBASSY WOULD HOPE THAT ANY USG FUNDING/ INVOLVEMENT COULD BE DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO NARCOTIC AND DRUG ABUSE.

C. DISCUSSION OF PHASE III (PAGE 18 OF RESOURCE PLANNING CORPORATION'S PROJECT) INDICATES THAT ONE OF PURPOSES IS TO BUILD UP CEMEF. WHILE THIS MIGHT BE LAUDABLE OBJECTIVE, IT IS NOT ONE WHICH SHOULD BE SINGLED OUT AS A GOAL OF USG- FUNDED PROGRAM.

3. AS DISCUSSED IN REFTELECON, DR. BELSASSO HAS MOVED WITH REGRETTABLE HASTE IN ASSUMING APPROVAL OF THIS PROJECT. BASED ON APRIL 12 TELECON HE HELD WITH MR. GARY PIERCE OF RESOURCE PLANNING CORPORATION, BELSASSO UNDERSTOOD THAT SAODAP AND STATE DEPARTMENT HAD APPROVED \$75,000 FUNDING FOR PROJECT. CONSEQUENTLY, HE INFORMED ATTORNEY RENEAL OJEDA PAUTTA AND SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE JIMENEZ CANTU THAT THIS FUNDING WAS ASSURED. (COMMENT: EMBASSY SURMISES THAT BELSASSO DISINGENUOUSLY MAY HAVE USED THIS TACTIC AS PART OF HIS OWN CAMPAIGN TO SECURE GOM BUDGETARY SUPPORT.) EMBASSY OFFICER DISABUSED BELASSO OF IMPRESSION THAT USG HAD AGREED TO SUPPORT THIS PROJECT, BUT RATHER THAT PROPOSAL IS UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION. BELSASSO WAS COUNSELED TO AWAIT OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION THROUGH EMBASSY BEFORE MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS CONTINGENT ON USG PARTICIPATION.

4. BELSASSO HAS MADE CLEAR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT HE CONSIDERS EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY TO BE HIGHEST PRIORITY PROJECT IN WHICH CEMEF IS INVOLVED. THIS WOULD TAKE CLEAR PRECEDENCE OVER PROPOSED CHRONIC MARIJUANA USE STUDY, ALTHOUGH BELSASSO

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BELIEVES CEMEF CAPABLE SIMULTANEOUSLY OF UNDERTAKING BOTH PROJECTS. IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION, BELSASSO STATED THAT GOM WOULD CONTRIBUTE APPROXIMATELY 2,000,000 PESOS TO EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY. HIS PLANS ARE TO INITIATE STUDY AROUND MAY 1, EVIDENTLY REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN RE USG SUPPORT.

5. IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED IN REF A, NARCOTICS COMMITTEE CONCLUDES THAT CEMEF, WHATEVER ITS FLEDGLING WEAKNESSES, IS ONLY MEXICAN ORGANIZATION PRESENTLY DEVOTED TO AND CAPABLE OF WORKING ON PROPOSED EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, DR. BELSASSO HIMSELF IS AMBITIOUS AND MERCURIAL; WE BELIEVE HE WILL STAY WITH CEMEF AS LONG AS THAT BODY IS DYNAMIC. HENCE, TO AN UNCOMFORTABLE DEGREE, HIS PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IS DEPENDENT ON CEMEF'S PROGRESS IN UNDERTAKING SIZEABLE PROJECTS SUCH AS THAT IN QUESTION. HE HAS INFORMED EMBASSY INFORMALLY THAT HIS FIRST YEAR'S BUDGET IS "SLIGHTLY UNDER \$1,000,000 (U. S.)". EMBASSY WOULD ASSUME CHANCES FOR COMPARABLE FUTURE BUDGETING ARE REASONABLY GOOD, PROVIDING THAT CEMEF CAN SHOW SOME TANGIBLE RESULTS. HENCE, ONCE AGAIN, ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION RESTS TO A CERTAIN DEGREE ON OUR DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO SUPPORT BELSASSO'S EFFORTS.
DEAN UNQUOTE
PORTER

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